

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A spinal fusion system for use as a prosthetic implant comprising:
 - a housing dimensioned to be situated between adjacent spinal bones, said housing defining a graft area; and
 - a cover for covering said opening to facilitate preventing anterior migration of said graft material;
 - said housing comprising at least one wall that defines an opening after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones to permit in-situ loading of graft material;
 - said cover adapted to be secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones such that it permits said housing to migrate or float relative to said cover.
2. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 1 wherein said housing is generally U-shaped.
3. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 1 wherein said housing surrounds said graft area and cooperates with said adjacent spinal bones to define a caged area comprising a predetermined shape and defining an anterior opening to permit said anterior loading of said graft material.

12. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 1 wherein said cover is fitted to said housing either by mechanical attachment or by floating adjacency allowing for settling and controlled motion of adjacent spinal bones.

13. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 1 wherein said housing comprises migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological elements after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

14. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 13 wherein said migration preventers comprise at least one tab.

15. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 13 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of ~~tabs that~~ adapted to engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

16. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 15 wherein ~~each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface, said plurality of tabs engaging said~~ are adapted to engage adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

17. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 1 wherein said housing further comprises:

a first wall portion and a second wall portion, said first and second wall portions being integrally formed into said housing and defining a channel area for receiving said cover.

18. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 17 wherein said first and second wall portions extend beyond said housing.

4. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 3 wherein said predetermined shape causes said graft material to be formed into a multi-sided fused coupling between said adjacent spinal bones.

5. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 3 wherein said predetermined shape defines a height of at least 2 millimeters and less than 180 millimeters.

6. (Cancel)

7. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 1 wherein said ~~cover is~~ cover is adapted to be secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones.

8. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 7 wherein said cover is adapted to provide ~~provides~~ mechanical fixation of adjacent spinal bones.

9. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 7 wherein said cover is adapted to be secured to each of said adjacent spinal bones.

10. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 1 wherein said cover is adapted to be secured to ~~said housing~~ said adjacent spinal bones to fix the spatial relationship between them and substantially simultaneously covering the graft area.

11. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 1 wherein a single cage is used during a multiple level vertebrectomy or discectomy in place of a plurality of spinal bones or plurality of discs, respectively.

19. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recite in claim 17 wherein said first and second wall portions each comprising a beveled edge, said cover also comprising beveled edges for mating with said beveled edges of said first and second wall portions when said cover is situated over said opening.

20. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 19 wherein said first and second wall portions extend beyond said housing and define a plurality of migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

21. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 13 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs defined by said first and second wall portions, said plurality of tabs engaging said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

22. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 15 wherein each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface, said plurality of tabs engaging said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

23. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 1 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

24. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 23 wherein said spinal fusion system further comprises a cover for covering said opening, said at least one migration stop cooperating with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

25. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 23 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

26. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 25 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

27. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 24 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

28. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 20 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

29. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 28 wherein said spinal fusion system further comprises a cover for covering said opening, said at least one migration stop cooperating with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

30. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 28 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

31. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 1 wherein said spinal fusion system comprises a plurality of housings each comprising an opening for receiving graft material;
said cover covering said opening of each of said plurality of housings.

32. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 31 wherein said plurality of housings comprises a first housing located between a first pair of spinal bones and a second housing located between a second pair of spinal bones, wherein said first pair and

second pair of spinal bones each comprise at least one spinal bones that is not the same, said cover being secured to a plurality of spinal bones to thereby cover said openings.

33. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 31 wherein said cover is situated in operative relationship to said plurality of housings to allow for settling or motion of said spinal bones.

34. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 6 wherein said comprises at least one resilient detent associated with an opening for permitting a screw to be situated in said opening and adapted to be screwed into a spinal-bones bones, said at least one resilient detent ~~preventing~~ adapted to prevent said screw from withdrawing from said spinal-bones bone.

35. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 34 wherein said at least one resilient detent comprises a spring detent integrally with said cover.

36. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 1 wherein said cover comprises a generally planar member and an integral lock for preventing withdrawal of at least one screw ~~after said at least one screw is screwed into a spinal bone~~.

37. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ spinal fusion system as recited in claim 36 wherein said generally planar member comprises an ~~elongated~~ resilient member integrally formed in said plate;

said resilient member comprising a detent portion,
said resilient member moving from a home position when ~~it is screwed into a spinal bone~~, said at least one screw is received in said cover and returning to said home position after said at least one screw clears said detent portion.

38. (Currently Amended) The ~~implant~~ spinal fusion system as recited in claim 36 wherein said resilient member is generally L-shaped in cross-section.

39. (Currently Amended) The ~~implant~~ spinal fusion system as recited in claim 38 wherein said cover comprises a plate is plate comprising titanium.

40. (Currently Amended) A spinal bones fusing system comprising:
a housing for situating between a first spinal bones and a second spinal bones;
bones and
for covering said opening to facilitate preventing anterior migration of said graft
material;
said housing being generally U-shaped and cooperating with said first and second spinal bones to define an opening that opens into a graft area for receiving graft material;
said cover being adapted to be secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones
such that it permits said housing to migrate or float relative to said cover while covering said
opening.

41. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said housing comprises a first leg portion, a second leg portion and a joining portion joining said first and second leg portions, said joining portion being situated between a spinal cord and said opening when said housing is situated between said first and second spinal bones.

42. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said graft area comprises a predetermined shape and defines an anterior graft opening to permit said anterior loading of said graft material into said graft area.

43. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 42 wherein said predetermined shape causes said graft material to be formed into a multi-sided fused coupling between said adjacent spinal bones.

44. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 42 wherein said predetermined shape defines a height of at least 2 millimeters and less than 180 millimeters.

45. (Cancel)

46. (Currently Amended) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in ~~claim 45~~ claim 40 wherein said cover is adapted to be secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones.

47. (Currently Amended) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 46 wherein said cover is adapted to be secured to each of said adjacent spinal bones.

48. (Currently Amended) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in ~~claim 45~~ claim 40 wherein said cover is adapted to be secured to said housing.

49. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said housing comprises migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

50. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said migration preventers comprise at least one tab.

51. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs that engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

52. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 42 wherein each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface, said plurality of tabs engaging said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

53. (Currently Amended) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in ~~claim 6~~ claim 40 wherein said housing further comprises:

a first wall portion and a second wall portion, said first and second wall portions being integrally formed into said housing and defining a channel area for receiving said cover.

54. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 44 wherein said first and second wall portions extend beyond said housing.

55. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recite in claim 44 wherein said first and second wall portions each comprising a beveled edge, said cover also comprising beveled edges for mating with said beveled edges of said first and second wall portions when said cover is situated over said opening.

56. (Currently Amended) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in ~~claim 45~~ claim 40 wherein said first and second wall portions extend beyond said housing and define a plurality of migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

57. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs defined by said first and second wall portions, said plurality of tabs engaging said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

58. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 42 wherein each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface, said plurality of tabs engaging said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

59. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

60. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 49 wherein said spinal bones fusing system further comprises a cover for covering said opening, said at least one migration stop cooperating with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

61. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 49 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

62. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 61 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

63. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 59 wherein said at least one of migration stop is a cross member secured to said housing.

64. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 46 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

65. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 64 wherein said spinal bones fusing system further comprises a cover for covering said opening, said at least one migration stop cooperating with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

66. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 64 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

67. (Currently Amended) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in ~~claim 45~~ claim 40 wherein said spinal bones fusing system comprises a plurality of housings each comprising an opening for receiving graft material;
said cover covering said opening of each of said plurality of housings.

68. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 67 wherein said plurality of housings comprises a first housing located between a first pair of spinal bones and a second housing located between a second pair of spinal bones, wherein said first pair and second pair of spinal bones each comprise at least one spinal bones that is not the same, said cover being secured to a plurality of spinal bones to thereby cover said openings.

69. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said graft area comprises a length that generally corresponds to a length of a single spinal bones.

70. (Original) The spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said graft area comprises a length that generally corresponds to a length of a plurality of spinal bones.

71. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 40 wherein said cover comprises a generally planar member and an integral lock for preventing withdrawal of at least one screw ~~after said at least one screw is screwed into a spinal bone.~~

72. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 71 wherein said generally planar member comprises ~~an elongated~~ a resilient member integrally formed in said plate;

said resilient member comprising a detent portion,

said resilient member moving from a home position when ~~it is screwed into a spinal bone,~~ said at least one screw is received in said cover and returning to said at least the home position after said screw clears said detent portion.

73. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 71 wherein said resilient member is generally L-shaped in cross-section.

74. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ spinal bones fusing system as recited in claim 73 wherein said cover comprises a plate ~~is plate comprising~~ titanium.

75. (Currently Amended) A method for fusing spinal bones together, comprising the steps of:

situating a cage in a graft area between spinal bones, said cage cooperating with said spinal bones to define an anterior opening for introducing graft material into said graft area;

situating graft material through said anterior opening and into said graft area; and covering said anterior opening with a cover;

said cover adapted to be secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones such that it permits said housing to migrate or float relative to said cover while covering said anterior opening.

76. (Original) The method as recited in claim 75 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

inserting said cage between said spinal bones until at least one migration preventor stops said cage from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure.

77. (Original) The method as recited in claim 76 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

inserting said cage between said spinal bones until said at least one migration preventor engages at least one of said spinal bones.

78. (Original) The method as recited in claim 75 wherein said covering step further comprises the step of securing a cover to said spinal bones in order to cover said opening.

79. (Original) The method as recited in claim 75 wherein said cage comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of a single spinal bones.

80. (Original) The method as recited in claim 75 wherein said cage comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of multiple spinal bones.

81. (Original) The method as recited in claim 75 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

situating a plurality of cages into a plurality of graft areas, each of said plurality of cages cooperating with a plurality of spinal bones to define a plurality of graft openings.

82. (Original) The method as recited in claim 81 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

securing a cover to said spinal bones, said cover covering each of said plurality of graft openings.

83. (Original) The method as recited in claim 75 wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

removing said cover; and

inserting a second cage into a second graft area between two spinal bones, said second cage cooperating with said spinal bones to define a second anterior opening for introducing graft material into said second graft area;

securing said cover to said spinal bones to cover said anterior opening and said second anterior opening.

84. (Currently Amended) An implant for facilitating grafting spinal bones together, comprising:

a housing for situating between said spinal bones, said housing cooperating with said spinal bones to define a graft area and an opening for introducing graft material into said graft opening; and

a cover ~~for securing~~ adapted to be secured to said spinal bones;

said cover not being secured to said housing and substantially simultaneously covering said opening after said graft material is situated ~~it is fixed to said spinal bones in said graft area such that it permits said housing to migrate or float relative to said cover mounted over said opening.~~

85. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said opening is an anterior opening.

86. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said cover fixes said spinal bones in a predetermined position.

87. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 86 wherein said cover permits said housing to move relative to said cover after said cover is secured to said spinal bones.

88. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 86 wherein said graft area comprises a dimension that generally corresponds to a dimension of a single spinal bones.

89. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 86 wherein graft area comprises a dimension that generally corresponds to a dimension of multiple spinal bones.

90. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said housing is generally U-shaped.

91. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said housing cooperates with said spinal bones to define an anterior opening that permits said graft material to be situated in said graft area after said housing is situated between said spinal bones.

92. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said housing comprises migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

93. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said migration preventers comprise at least one tab.

94. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs that engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

95. (Currently Amended) The implant as recited in claim 86 wherein ~~each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface~~, said plurality of tabs ~~engaging~~ adapted to engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

96. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said housing further comprises:
a first wall portion and a second wall portion, said first and second wall portions being integrally formed into said housing and defining a channel area for receiving said cover.

97. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 96 wherein said first and second wall portions define an area for receiving said cover between said first and second wall portions.

98. (Original) The implant as recite in claim 96 wherein said first and second wall portions each comprising a beveled edge, said cover also comprising beveled edges for mating with said beveled edges of said first and second wall portions when said cover is situated over said opening.

99. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 96 wherein said first and second wall portions comprise elongated portions that extend beyond said housing to define a plurality of migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

100. (Currently Amended) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs defined by said first and second wall portions, said plurality of tabs ~~engaging~~ adapted to engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

101. (Currently Amended) The implant as recited in claim 100 wherein ~~each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an exterior surface~~, said plurality of tabs ~~engaging~~ are adapted to engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

102. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

103. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 102 wherein said at least one migration stop cooperates with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

104. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 102 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

105. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 104 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

106. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 92 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

107. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 106 wherein said at least one migration stop cooperates with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

108. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 107 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

109. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 108 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

110. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 89 wherein said implant comprises a plurality of housings, each defining said opening for receiving graft material;
said cover covering each opening of each of said plurality of housings after said cover is secured to said spinal bones.

111. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 110 wherein said plurality of housings comprises a first housing located between a first pair of spinal bones and a second housing located between a second pair of spinal bones, wherein said first pair and second pair of spinal bones each comprise at least one spinal bones that is not the same, said cover being secured to a plurality of spinal bones to thereby cover said openings while simultaneously fixing said spinal bones relative to each other.

112. (Currently Amended) The implant as recited in claim 84 wherein said cover comprises a generally planar member and an integral lock for preventing withdrawal of at least one screw after said at least one screw ~~is screwed into a spinal bone~~ is received in said cover.

113. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant~~ implant as recited in claim 112 wherein said generally planar member comprises ~~an elongated~~ a resilient member integrally formed in said plate;

said resilient member comprising a detent portion,
said resilient member moving from a home position ~~when it is screwed into a spinal bone,~~ in response to said at least one screw being screwed and returning to said home position after said at least one screw clears said detent portion.

114. (Original) The implant as recited in claim 113 wherein said resilient member is generally L-shaped in cross-section.

115. (Currently Amended) The implant as recited in claim 114 wherein said cover comprises a titanium plate is titanium.

116. (Currently Amended) A method for fusing spinal bones together, comprising the steps of:

providing a housing for situating between spinal bones, said housing cooperating with said spinal bones to define an opening for introducing graft material into said graft area after said housing; ~~and~~

enabling said graft material to be introduced through said opening and into said graft area after said housing is situated between said spinal bones; and

providing a plate adapted to be secured to said spinal bones to fix said spinal bones into a predetermined position relative to each other and to facilitate covering said opening after said graft material is introduced into said graft area such that said housing can float or migrate relative to said plate.

117. (Cancelled)

118. (Original) The method as recited in claim 116 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

providing a housing comprising at least one migration preventor that enables said housing to be inserted between said spinal bones until at least one migration preventor stops said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure.

119. (Original) The method as recited in ~~claim 117~~ claim 116 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

inserting said housing between said spinal bones until said at least one migration preventor engages at least one of said spinal bones.

120. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 116 wherein said covering step further comprises the step of securing ~~a cover~~ said plate to said spinal bones in order to cover said opening.

121. (Original) The method as recited in claim 116 wherein said housing comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of a single spinal bones.

122. (Original) The method as recited in claim 116 wherein said housing comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of multiple spinal bones.

123. (Original) The method as recited in claim 116 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

situating a plurality of housings into a plurality of graft areas, each of said plurality of housings cooperating with a plurality of spinal bones to define a plurality of graft openings.

124. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in ~~claim 117~~ claim 116 wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

providing a plate that can be detachably secured to said spinal bones to permit a second housing to be inserted into a patient, said second housing cooperating with spinal bones to provide a second opening, said plate covering both said opening and said second opening after it is secured to said spinal bones.

125. (Original) The method as recited in claim 116 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

providing a housing that is generally U-shaped.

126. – 130. (Cancelled)

131. (Currently Amended) A spinal fusion system for use as a prosthetic implant comprising:

a housing dimensioned to be situated between adjacent spinal bones, said housing defining a graft area for receiving a graft or graft-like material for generating a fusion between said adjacent spinal bones; and

a cover for covering said opening to facilitate preventing anterior migration of said graft material;

said housing comprising at least one wall that defines an opening after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones to permit post-placement loading of graft material;

said cover being adapted to be secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones such that it permits said housing to migrate or float relative to said cover.

132. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said housing is generally U-shaped.

133. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said housing surrounds said graft area and cooperates with said adjacent spinal bones to define a caged area comprising a predetermined shape and defining an anterior opening to permit said anterior loading of said graft material.

134. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 133 wherein said predetermined shape causes said graft material to be formed into a multi-sided fused coupling between said adjacent spinal bones.

135. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 133 wherein said predetermined shape defines a height of at least 2 millimeters and less than 180 millimeters.

136. (Cancelled)

137. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said cover is secured to at least one of said adjacent spinal bones.

138. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 137 wherein said cover provides mechanical fixation of adjacent spinal bones.

139. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 138 wherein said cover permits said housing to move in response to motion or settling of said spinal bones.

140. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 137 wherein said cover is secured to each of said adjacent spinal bones.

141. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein a single cage is used during a multiple level vertebrectomy or discectomy in place of a plurality of spinal bones or plurality of discs, respectively.

142. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein multiple cages are used during a multiple level vertebrectomy or discectomy in place of a plurality of spinal bones or plurality of discs, respectively.

143. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 141 wherein said cover is fitted to said housing either by mechanical attachment or by floating adjacency allowing for settling and controlled motion of adjacent spinal bones.

144. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said housing comprises migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological elements after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

145. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said migration preventers comprise at least one tab.

146. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs that engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

147. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 146 wherein each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface, said plurality of tabs engaging said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

148. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said housing further comprises:

a first wall portion and a second wall portion, said first and second wall portions being integrally formed into said housing and defining a channel area for receiving said cover.

149. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 148 wherein said first and second wall portions extend beyond said housing.

150. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recite in claim 148 wherein said first and second wall portions each comprising a beveled edge, said cover also comprising beveled

edges for mating with said beveled edges of said first and second wall portions when said cover is situated over said opening.

151. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 149 wherein said first and second wall portions extend beyond said housing and define a plurality of migration preventers for preventing said housing from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure after said housing is situated between said adjacent spinal bones.

152. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said migration preventers comprise a plurality of tabs defined by said first and second wall portions, said plurality of tabs ~~engaging~~ adapted to engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

153. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 152 wherein ~~each of said adjacent spinal bones comprise an anterior surface,~~ said plurality of tabs ~~engaging~~ are adapted to engage said adjacent spinal bones when said housing is situated therebetween.

154. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 131 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

155. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 154 wherein said spinal fusion system further comprises a cover for covering said opening, said at least one migration stop cooperating with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

156. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 154 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

157. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 156 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

158. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 155 wherein said plurality of migration stops are cross members secured to said housing.

159. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said system further comprises at least one migration stop for preventing anterior migration of said housing.

160. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 159 wherein said spinal fusion system further comprises a cover for covering said opening, said at least one migration stop cooperating with said cover to prevent said anterior migration.

161. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 159 wherein said system further comprises a plurality of migration stops.

162. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said spinal fusion system comprises a plurality of housings each comprising an opening for receiving graft material;
said cover covering said opening of each of said plurality of housings.

163. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 162 wherein said plurality of housings comprises a first housing located between a first pair of spinal bones and a second housing located between a second pair of spinal bones, wherein said first pair and second pair of spinal bones each comprise at least one spinal bones that is not the same, said cover being secured to a plurality of spinal bones to thereby cover said openings.

164. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 162 wherein said cover is situated in operative relationship to said plurality of housings to allow for settling or motion of said spinal bones.

165. (Currently Amended) The spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said cover comprises at least one resilient detent associated with an opening for permitting a screw to be situated in said opening and screwed into a spinal bones, said at least one resilient detent preventing said screw from withdrawing from said spinal bones.

166. (Original) The spinal fusion system as recited in claim 165 wherein said at least one resilient detent comprises a spring detent integrally with said cover.

167. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant spinal fusion system as recited in claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said cover comprises a generally planar member and an integral lock for preventing withdrawal of at least one screw ~~after said at least one screw is screwed into a spinal bone.~~

168. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant spinal fusion system as recited in claim 167~~ wherein said generally planar member comprises ~~an elongated~~ a resilient member integrally formed in said plate and defining said integral lock;

said resilient member comprising a detent portion,
said resilient member moving from a home position ~~when it is screwed into a spinal bone,~~ said at least one screw is received in said cover and returning to said home position after said at least one screw clears said detent portion.

169. (Currently Amended) ~~The implant spinal fusion system as recited in claim 167~~ wherein said resilient member is generally L-shaped in cross-section.

170. (Currently Amended) The ~~implant~~ spinal fusion system as recited in claim 169 wherein said cover defines a plate ~~comprises~~ comprising at least one of the following compositions: titanium, stainless, or carbon fiber.

171. (Currently Amended) The ~~implant~~ spinal fusion system as recited in ~~claim 136~~ claim 131 wherein said cover comprises an integral lock for locking screws securing said cover to spinal bone into a locked position after said screws are secured to a spinal bone and without the use of a tool.

172. (Original) A method for fusing spinal bones together, comprising the steps of:
removal of diseased or injured spinal bones and/or vertebral disks;
situating either a single cage or a plurality of cages between remaining spinal bones, said cage or cages cooperating with said spinal bones to define an anterior opening for introducing graft or graft-like material with the purpose of generating a fusion between adjacent spinal bones into said graft area;
situating graft material through said anterior opening and into said graft area; and
covering said anterior opening with a cover such that said cover permits either said single cage or said plurality of cages to migrate or float relative to said cover while performing said covering step; and
securing said cover to a plurality of spinal bones.

173. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said method further comprises the step of:
inserting said single cage or plurality of cages between said spinal bones until at least one migration preventor stops said cage from migrating toward a spinal cord or other neurological structure.

174. (Original) The method as recited in claim 173 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

inserting said cage between said spinal bones until said at least one migration preventor engages at least one of said spinal bones.

175. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said covering step further comprises the step of securing a cover to said spinal bones in order to cover said opening.

176. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said cage comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of a single spinal bones.

177. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said cage comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of multiple spinal bones.

178. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said cage comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of a single vertebral disk.

179. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said cage comprises a shape generally corresponding to a size of a multiple vertebral disks.

180. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

situating a plurality of cages into a plurality of graft areas, each of said plurality of cages cooperating with a plurality of spinal bones to define a plurality of graft openings.

181. (Original) The method as recited in claim 180 wherein said method further comprises the step of:

securing a cover to said spinal bones, said cover covering each of said plurality of graft openings.

182. (Original) The method as recited in claim 172 wherein said method further comprises the steps of:

removing said cover; and

inserting a second cage into a second graft area between two spinal bones, said second cage cooperating with said spinal bones to define a second anterior opening for introducing graft material into said second graft area;

securing a second cover to said spinal bones to cover said anterior opening and said second anterior opening, said second cover being longer than said cover.